Dell's cards + letter

Eulogy to

Vernon G. McMillan

December 4, 1968
Centenary Methodist Church
Terre Haute, Indiana
Howard T. Batman

EULOGY TO VERN McMILLAN

This is not intended to be a eulogy wherein we speak of Vern McMillan in hushed tones of sentiment. Mac — as we knew him — would not approve. For the friend we have lost, the ordinary eulogy will not suffice. The news media has rightly paid tribute to his memory. Let us speak briefly of the man and his works.

Mac chose Terre Haute as his city. A descendant of rugged pioneers, he came here as a young man from his native Kansas to work for his uncle in the Sayre Bicycle Shop. After graduation from Baker University, where he played quarterback on his football team, he returned to Terre Haute. When his country went to war, McMillan went into uniform and attained the rank of major in the army. When the war ended he came back to Terre Haute. Here he founded the business which bears his name.

He not only established a business which gained a national reputation, but he established a personal reputation for integrity of the highest order. As a friend and counselor of professional and collegiate athletic directors, athletes and coaches, he numbered among his friends and acquaintances the great and the near great of the athletic world.

As the business grew, his employees, whose welfare was his ever present concern, became partners and owners in the expanding business enterprise, sharing with Mac the achievements and adversities of the business community. To his employee-partners he gave of his time and counsel to encourage them and to enable them to walk in the sunlight of self reliance and security through their own efforts. He taught, lived and practiced the American dream of free enterprise. He made it a reality.

There were those who felt that Mac had stepped out of character when he chose to enter the political arena to become Terre Haute's Mayor in 1942. But the talents which made him a business success, his honesty in the competition of the market place, and his personal integrity stood him well in his new role. But he was a controversial mayor. Never one to run from a fight, stubbornly loyal to his convictions, uncompromising in a cause whenever he believed it to be right, all of this brought him into conflict with influential and powerful adversaries. But he fought for those things he believed to be right. He changed the face and character of a city, winning national recognition for a job well done. One writer commented that a determined mayor had enabled a city to regain its long lost self-respect. The changes were not easy to achieve. There were those who doubted that the square jawed McMillan could prevail. But many will recall his defiant, almost arrogant reply to his critics, that it is "mighty hard to whip a man who is right."

Vern McMillan had no time for prejudice. He believed in his country and that its principles of equality and freedom applied to all, regardless of creed or color. As Commander of his American Legion Post he chose the unpopular role of defying and publicly condemning the Ku Klux Klan for its unholy and un-American activity. He never hesitated to take a stand — even if he stood alone — when he believed his cause was right.

He was proud of his Scottish ancestry. It is interesting to read the motto on the McMillan coat-of-arms — translated it reads:

"I learn to help the unfortunate."

and this he did well. Unheralded, unpublicized, and unknown were his many deeds of charity:financial aid and guidance to needy church congregations; financial help, advice and encouragement to students to enable them to obtain an education.

Vern McMillan was a devout man. He wore his Christian habits without flair or ostentation — but the light shown through! He was dedicated and devoted to the well being of his children. He loved life and he lived it well. A man of the great out-of-doors, he was happiest, when, surrounded by family and friends, he could live the outdoor life. He was endowed with a great sense of humor, he looked for the bright side and found it, he was uncomplaining in adversity. He stood tall among men.

In his passing there is a stillness, filled with memories of his deeds. To those of us who knew him — to his children and to their descendants — he leaves a heritage greater than a heritage of riches.

In Loving Memory of

Ralph Tucker

Born Into Eternity
November 12, 1977

We pray that nothing of this life will be lost, but that it will be of benefit to the world; that all held sacred will be respected by those who follow, and everything with which this life was great may continue to mean much to us. We ask that this life may live on in the hearts and minds of family and friends and may we always be deeply conscious of your promise to be faithful to us in death.

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For Kelley Mayoralty Campaign Oct 1909

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

The war for Independence from the rule of England waged by the American colonies, beginning 1776, and the war for Independence in municipal government, from the rule of the local bi-partisan machine, waged by the Citizen's Independent League of Terre Haute, beginning 1909 are, in many ways, strikingly alike.

Each was preceded by long, long years of misrule, a misrule inherent in the false system. Colonial governors were not selected by King George III for fitness, but for subserviency to his will. So, also, with the bi-partisan machine. There was heavy taxation but no real representation. The King and his court ruled, the colonies in England; just as the bi-partisan machine, that is to say the privilege and franchise grabbers, largely non resident and the lawless element have ruled in Terre Haute. Finally, growing worse and worse the English King & Court

machine ordered British troops to massacre the American patriots at Lexington. Then came open revolt in America.

Similarly
~~At last~~ in Terre Haute the bi-partisan machine, growing worse and worse, ordered the political massacre of the tax payers, law lovers and special privilege fighters of this city at the primaries. Then came open revolt in Terre Haute. Was it not due?.

The Independence movement of 1776 and the Independent League movement of 1909 commenced in revolt, but they soon became Revolution. ~~but not~~ without regret
The patriots of '76 liked to be "regular"; they were loath to break with the Mother Country.

The patriots of 1909 also liked to be "regular"; they were loath to break with their political parties. But in the minds of both Right was more important than "Regularity".

The men who signed the Declaration of Independence of '76 and pledged to it their "lives,

their fortunes and their sacred honor", entered upon a difficult , and dangerous war with a strong,unscrupulous and relentless enemy. They were at the time of signing without a standard bearer;practically without an organization.

The men who signed the Declaration of Independence of 1909 and pledged themselves to fight for it also entered upon a difficult and dangerous war with a strong ,unscrupulous and relentless enemy.They ,too, were at the time without a standard bearer;practically without an organization.

As in '76 so in '09 the men who signed said to each other :" We must hang together or we will hang separately".But they were brave men and did not falter.

It was a long time after the colonial Declaration of Independence before the colonies formed a real central government and selected George

Washington as president. So also it was a long time after the Terre Haute Declation of Independence before the Citizen's Independence League completed a real central organization and selected Lee R Whitney for Mayor.

And yet in the meantime thousands of men had solemnly pledged themselves to each cause and thousands more quietly joined without pledging

The men of '76 were of all religious faiths from the Catholic to the Unitarian, from stiffly orthodox George Washington to decidedly free thinking Thomas Paine. So also are the men of '09

The Declation of '76 arraigns the King for " refusal to assent to laws the most wholsome and necessary for the public good ". The Declaration of '09 arraigns the bi-partisan machine for placing in office a justice of the peace who flagrantly sets aside an election law "wholesome and necessary to the public good"

The Declation of '76 arraigns some of the King's

judges ;so also does the Declaration of '09. The Declaration of '76 assails the King for "taking away our charters" meaning colonial charters. The declaration of '09 assails the bi partisan machine for taking away our municipal franchises without adequate compensation.

What is a bi-partisan machine?. It is a combination of political bosses and special interests members of both the Democratic and Republican parties having a secret understanding or working agreement to divide certain spoils of office and protect certain special interests no matter whether Democrats or Republicans win. These special interests usually concern municipal franchises or profits made by non-enforcement of the law. Bi-partisan machines flourish in many cities. One of the worst in history was that headed by Croker and Platt.

Is there not also a parallel between the way Washington was chosen president and the way

Whitney was chosen candidate for Mayor?. Neither sought the office. Each had to be urged to accep its responsibilities and each yielded to impor tunity solely in order to serve the public to the best of his ability.

It is not my purpose to say unkind things of either Mr. Gerhardt or Mr. ~~Whitney~~ truly. I am on friendly personal terms with both of them. But you republicans, who have revolted in such large numbers say Mr. Horsely got rich as sheriff, and not satisfied with that has become so fond of public office he is spending large sums in a frantic effort to become Mayor. You seem to think this undignified for an aspirant for the highest office in the gift of the people of this city. You have an idea that a Mayor such as our great and growing city deserves to have and must have if it realizes its great possibilities, ~~must have~~ should be a man of exceptional executive abilities. You say Mr Horsely

has no special qualifications for this high office except his extreme desire to occupy it and that some of his associates and bodn companions are not such as to commend him for an office of this unusual character.

And we Democrats say ~~also~~ that Mr. Gerhardt Worsely also has no special qualifications for this office.

And all men know whether they have the candor to say it or not that the bi-partisan machine went too far when it nominated for Mayor of this city a man who has spent the greater part of his business career as a saloon keeper and not a law-abiding one either.

And beside all this all are aware that no matter whether Mr. Worsely or Mr. Wharhrt is elected the bi-partisan machine wins and the people lose. They know further that these men will take office, if elected, as practically all under the bi-partisan system must take office

burdened with obligations. They will be plastered with political mortgages, liens, judgments receiverships and writs of capias. Even with the best of intentions they would not be able to give what Terre Haute needs.

On the other hand Mr Whitney is free. He is weighted with no obligations. He will impartially consistently and persistently enforce the law, something that will prove of inestimable value to the city. He will treat the public service corporations fairly but will compel them, as far as lies in his power to deal fairly with the public. He will protect the taxpayer by getting in business way a dollars worth of service or value for every dollar expended. He will give to the city his exceptional executive ability, his untiring energy and his successful business experience.

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MAYORS - T. H.

Capt. James Hook

HAT TERRE HAUTEANS READ IN THE NEWSPAPERS OF 40 YEARS AGO

S. W. SNIVELY.

Indiana Fairbanks Public Library

"Captain James Hook, second Mayor of Terre Haute, died Sunday afternoon after a lingering illness, at the age of nearly 80 years. One of Terre Haute's oldest citizens, he was born in Waynesburg, Pa., July 8, 1813. His parents died while he was quite young and he was taken to raise by an uncle, who was a carpenter and cabinet maker, and under him he learned those trades.

"At the age of 28 he started out with another young man to see the world and, after great wandering, came to Terre Haute in the spring of 1837. This was then a little village and he has lived here ever since, watching the little hamlet grow and enlarge into the present flourishing city. After a year spent in carpentering he took to contracting on his own hook.

"He has carried on this business more extensively than any other man in the city and, as he himself once said, he had 'seen every building on Main street built, from the river to the Rose orphans' home, with the exception of the old brick at Second and Main streets, which was up when I came here.'

"Captain Hook built many of those buildings himself. Among other principal buildings he built are the Naylor opera house, the old Normal school building, which was destroyed by fire a few years ago, and the original First ward school on Fourth street as well as hundreds of smaller buildings.

"When he built the school house it was in the face of violent opposition. Wiseacres said that it was a waste of money to build such a large building. But it has long since been removed for the more commodious building which now bears his name.

"In 1855 he was elected mayor of Terre Haute on the issue of enforcement of the prohibitory law of the state, it being understood that he was in favor of the law, and was a man of sufficient nerve to enforce it. He went to work with a will and closed all the liquor stores. Within three or four months the law was declared unconstitutional and there was a reaction.

"It is said that this was the only record in the city that the liquor law was enforced to the letter. A number of saloon men brought damage suits against Mr. Hook and judgments amounting to $1,200 were served against his property. The legislature came to his relief by imposing payment in all counties in which the law had been enforced.

"In his race for mayor Hook represented the working class of Terre Haute. The contest was a warm one and his opponents applied to him the title of 'greasy machinist.' The name took like wildfire and became a regular watchword. He was elected by a decided majority and his success was regarded by the common people as a great triumph.

"In 1858 the movement to establish common schools in Terre Haute was inaugurated. Mr. Hook was chosen one of the men to push the matter. Others of the band were Armory Kng, Moses Virgil Burnett and Joseph Cooper. The conservative and moneyed citizens were opposed to the free schools, as they objected to their children associating with the 'common herd'.

"To the efforts and energy of Mr. Hook and his associates we are indebted for the magnificent public school system we have today, for by hard work they laid the foundation stone for the present day system. The prejudice against it gradually gave way.

"For fifty years of his life Mr. Hook was connected with the Odd Fellows and was the father of Odd Fellowship in Terre Haute. When the civil war broke out he was serving as township trustee and was an active worker in organizing a relief association for the families of volunteers in the service, devoting his entire time for four years to the work. At one time he had 400 families under his charge. Directly after the war he went into the planing mill business, remaining in it until a few years ago, when his plant was burned and he retired from active business.

"November 2, 1840, Mr. Hook married Miss Vienna A. Herring, who came to Terre Haute with her parents in 1827. To them were born eight children, two of whom are still living, Mrs. S. L. Fenner and Jacob Hook Jr., who lives at the family home.

"'The business part of Terre Haute when I came here,' said Mr. Hook recently, 'was on Water, First, Second and Third streets from Ohio to Mulberry. On Water street and along the river pork houses were located and also the cooper shops. The pork packing from November to April made business lively and the building of flat boats and shipping of pork and other products to New Orleans was the leading business interest at that period.

"The panic began in June, 1837, caused by the issuing of the specie circular in Van Buren's administration, which directed that all government dues, including receipts at the land offile, be paid in gold or silver. This caused a suspension from all the banks and gold and silver were things to be talked about but rarely seen. Very little was done in the shops, merchants putting in their time at hunting, fishing or playing poker or 'red dog' with a five-cent ante.

"Farm products prices went way down. Corn was 10 to 15 cents a bushel; wheat, 35 to 37 cents; potatoes, 12 to 15 cents; eggs, two to three cents a dozen; butter, five cents a pound; chickens, 50 to 60 cents a dozen; pork, one and one and one-half cents a pound. Good mechanics were paid in trade at the rate of 75 cents to a dollar per day when there was anything to do."